Plan of Action
2002 – 2003

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

A. Mandate and Mission

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women derives from the statute establishing the Council. Section 4(1) requires the Council to advise the Minister and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia. Section 4(2) defines the powers of the Council, which may:

- receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women
- undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women
- recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women
- propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status
- publish reports, studies and recommendations

Mission

- To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia

Planning Context

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a government agency with the purpose of bringing forward to government the concerns of women in Nova Scotia and advising on measures to advance the equality of women, as mandated by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

The Advisory Council has eight vacancies coming up at the start of FY2002-3. While some of these vacancies may be filled through reappointments of existing members, the orientation and integration of new members in a well-functioning Advisory Council will be a key focus for the year. A major opportunity for the coming year is that the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be marking its 25th anniversary in 2002-3.

Because the agency's funding has been reduced over the past years, it is of great importance that we continue to seek partnerships and sponsorships to fund some of the initiatives the agency undertakes. Federal funding partnerships, cost-sharing arrangements, corporate support: these funding sources will be sought on a continuing basis, to raise sufficient funding for the priorities proposed for 2002-2003.
Key users and stakeholders of the agency are:

- Status of Women Minister and other elected representatives
- Equality-seeking women's groups

- Individual women seeking information, referral and assistance
- Researchers and students
- Policy and research staff within government
- Government departments/agencies
- Media
- Employers and unions
- Agencies and organizations that serve women

The Council meets some 2,000 requests for information, referral and assistance per year, and expects to welcome 50,000 visitors to its increasingly popular website in the coming year.

C. *Strategic Goals and Government Priorities*

The Advisory Council members have defined the following strategic goals for the work of the agency:

Inclusion

- to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

Economic Equality

- To promote women's economic equality.

Elimination of Violence Against Women

- To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.

Health and Well-Being

- To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

These goals, as well as the priorities and strategies planned for their achievement, relate to the overall goals and priorities of Government in the following ways:

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- ***Put and keep Nova Scotia's finances in order/Fiscal stability***

  - Reductions in staff since 1996 include 4.5 person years, about 36 percent of the previous establishment. Finance, human resources, information technology, and communications functions are carried out via central service units, resulting in low administrative costs, and the fieldwork program of the Council has been reduced.

  - Efforts to attract additional funding for research activities were initiated in 2000-2001, with a five-year, $ 1.7 million proposal advanced in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, and the IWK Health Centre.

- ***Putting crucial services such as health, education, and social services on a sustainable footing/Sustainable Health Care Management***

  - Council recommendations and advice address these areas, with a view to providing cost-effective solutions to the challenges faced by the sectors mentioned, and also alerting government to potential opportunities or problems in ensuring the sustainability of these services. Council staff participate in and actively support such cross-government initiatives as the Sustainable Communities Initiative, the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence, and various initiatives in the Justice arena. The successful Healthy Balance research program will produce important social and health policy inputs to foster effective interventions in population health.

- ***Providing reasonable and responsible governance***

  - The Advisory Council on the Status of Women has the full participation and social inclusion of all women as its first goal, and will continue its activities to increase the political participation of Nova Scotian women.

  - The Council remains government's visible commitment to women's full legal, social, political, and economic equality.

- ***Create conditions that help the economy grow***

  The Advisory Council on the Status of Women participates actively in initiatives promoting women's full participation in the province's economic development:

- Women's Community Economic Development Network
- Sustainable Communities Initiative
- Interdepartmental Committee on Community Economic Development
- Women in Information Technology and Women in Trades, Technology, and Blue Collar Occupations

The Council provides leadership and expertise, ensuring inclusion of women's perspectives and interests in economic development initiatives.

- ***Provide Nova Scotians with an opportunity to learn throughout their lives so that they can continue to succeed in a rapidly changing world/Education and Skills Training***

  The work of the Advisory Council retains a strong focus on girls' and young women's educational and occupational opportunities and choices, with a particular focus on science, technology, and trades. Through support for programs such as Hypatia, Techsploration, ANSWERS, and Women's CED Network, we support girls and women in seizing learning opportunities in all occupations throughout the life course.

- ***Professional Public Service***

  The Advisory Council on the Status of Women supports this goal through appropriate information and referral of women in the public service who seek advice on matters such as career development.

- ***Foster an environment that allows and encourages Nova Scotians to work, raise families, and stay in Nova Scotia***

  As indicated above, the Council's work in the promotion of educational and economic opportunities for girls and women of all ages supports a positive economic atmosphere for all Nova Scotians, promoting diversity in our workforce.

The pursuit of women's equality is a solid investment in Nova Scotia. Throughout the world, women's full participation in all aspects of economic, political, and social life is demonstrably a precursor and consequence–a benign circle–for the creation of opportunity for all citizens, including the youngest ones.

D. Core Functions

1. Policy & Research

Advises Minister on concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. Conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with academic and community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely and accurate guide to governmental action.

2. Information & Education

Collects and disseminates information on women's issues to Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders including media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

3. Community Liaison & Rural Outreach

Through the Council members and the Field Work Program, brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically disadvantaged groups. Partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

E. Priorities 2002/2003

1. Policy & Research

- Maintain Council effectiveness through orientation program for new members, support for Council Chair, media training for new members, and professional and administrative support for Council work.

- Participate in FPT forum of Senior Status of Women Officials and support Minister in the FPT forum of Status of Women Ministers, with particular focus on women's entry to occupations in high-growth areas of the economy.

- Increase the ability of government policy staff to include the concerns and interests of women in policy development through development and dissemination of gender-based analysis tools.

- Prepare and present briefs on major initiatives and legislative changes affecting women.

- Inform public and policy audiences on issues related to women's economic security through publication of the fifth volume of ***Women in Nova Scotia: A Statistical Series*** to provide updated statistical information on women's paid and unpaid work; and to implement a Roundtable on Women's Economic Security.

- Continue the Healthy Balance research program in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre. This is the second year of a five-year program of research which has been funded for $1.7 million by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research to investigate the health impacts of care giving roles on Nova Scotians.

- Collaborate with government and non-government agencies on issues related to women's sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS concerns.

2. *Information & Education*

- Media relations: Implement activities outlined in the communications strategy for the Advisory Council's 25th Anniversary as resources allow, and continue to mark key dates and events throughout the year, with particular attention to International Women's Day, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and Women's History Month; ensure public awareness of council accomplishments and positions through appropriate communications plans and actions.

- Support Minister's ongoing information needs. Support research and community liaison functions through adequate informational support. Provide information and referral to some 2000 inquiries per annum. Maintain and enhance web site, responding to identified information needs.

3. *Community Liaison & Rural Outreach*

- Continue workshops to promote women's leadership and participation in public affairs.

- Work with organizations such as: Women in CED Network, women's business groups, Techsploration, Hypatia, and L'Association des Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse to foster economic equality and life-long learning in all occupational areas, particularly in fields where women remain under-represented.

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- Participate on the Coordinating Committee and Field Teams of the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

Budget Context Chart

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women *Estimated Budget Expenditures by Core Business*		
Core Business	*2001-2* *$000's*	*2002-3* *$000's*
1. Policy and Research	133	175.8
2. Information, Education and Public Awareness	137.1	104.4
3. Community Liaison and Rural Outreach	180	154.6
Administration and Support	218.5	211.2
Total - Gross Current	668.6	646
Total - Program Expenses net of Recoveries	668.6	646
Salaries and Benefits	454.1	452.9
Funded Staff (FTE's)	8.8	7.8

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Policy & Research						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Sustained Effectiveness of Advisory Council	Ability to meet legislated mandate of advising Minister and bringing forward the concerns of women	Council member satisfaction with orientation (low to high)	High	High	High	Maintain Council orientation and media training using previous experience and expert media advice
		Council member self-ratings of participation in community (1 to 10)	Average of 6 out of 10	Average of 6.5 out of 10	Average of 7 or higher out of 10	Include networking training in 2002/03 Council orientation.

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Policy & Research						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Increased inclusion of women in government policy development and program design	Increased under-standing by gov't policy staff and NGOs of gender-based analysis (GBA)	Proportion of selected gov't departments and NGOs who found the Council's GBA tool to be useful	N/A - this is a new initiative by Council	50%	60%	Develop and disseminate plain language, multi-purpose GBA tool to selected gov't departments and NGOs. Offer training opportunities for its use. We will solicit feedback on the utility of the GBA tool from those gov't departments and NGOs who were initially sent the tool. In this way we will determine the proportion of departments/NGOs who found the tool useful for their policy/program/research work. As the GBA tool will also be on the Council's website, we will also obtain feedback on the GBA tool via the Stakeholder Feedback Survey described on the last page of this outcome measures section.

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Policy & Research						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
	High quality advice to government on ways to further women's equality	User satisfaction survey to assess timeliness and utility of Council's policy briefs (low to high on each dimension)	Assessed primarily in terms of popularity of Council publications (approx 4500 PDF downloads)	high	high	Prepare and present briefs on major initiatives and legislative changes related to violence against women, eg., *Divorce Act* reform, restorative justice, conditional sentencing, etc. Complete statistical series on women in Nova Scotia. A short feedback form will be included with each brief submission to determine principal users' satisfaction with the publication's timeliness and utility.

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Information & Education						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Public awareness of Council initiatives	Website usage	Tracking of Council website visits	47,500 website visits	50,000 + website visits	50,000 + website visits	Maintain and enhance Council web-site, responding to identified information needs.
	Information and referral requests	Tracking of requests by all staff	1800-2000 requests	2000 + requests	2000 + requests	Maintain Council's 1-800 line and publicize its availability in Council publications.
Public support for and satisfaction with Council's work	Demand for Council publications	Tracking of publications requested by public, NGOs, etc., as well as those downloaded from website	eg., from Dec/01 to Feb/02 users requested approximately 10,000 copies of *Making Changes*	5000+ requests for publications (hard copy and PDF downloads combined)	5000+ requests for publications (hard copy and PDF downloads combined)	We consider the popularity of and consistent demand for our publications to be an indicator of their value.

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Information & Education						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
	User satisfaction with Council publications	Short user satisfaction survey to assess how well our publications are meeting the needs of our users	this is a new initiative, prior to this year, we used only the volume of demand as an indicator	3+ on a 5-point scale	3+ on a 5-point scale	We will obtain feedback on Council publications via the Stakeholder Feedback Survey described on the last page of this outcome measures section. In addition, we will solicit feedback from some of the principal users of our more popular publications, eg., *Making Changes* by providing transition houses, women's centres, and RCMP with feedback forms when they request copies of our publications.

Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Community Liaison & Rural Outreach						
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year Measure**	**Target 2002/2003**	**Target 2004/2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Increased participation of women in public affairs	Level of demand and interest by women in women's leadership workshops as well as workshop effectiveness	Number of women enrolled in workshops	20 per workshop	30 per workshop	30 per workshop with total enrolment of 250	Continue workshops to enhance and promote women's leadership and participation in public affairs.
		Workshop effectiveness as measured by attendees' plans to participate in public affairs	to be determined	25% of women indicate plans to participate in public affairs	25% of women indicate plans to participate in public affairs	

Stakeholder Feedback Survey:

On an annual basis we will solicit feedback from our principal stakeholders (these include provincial and federal gov't policy and program staff, students/educators, women's organizations, members of the business community, members of the general public, etc.). Using our new electronic newsletter format (NewsBytes), we will solicit feedback from our stakeholders on a number of dimensions including: Council publications (including GBA tool), Council website, our Resource Centre, our networking and liaison with community organizations and government committees, etc.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Highlights: Plan of Action 2002 / 2003

Mission

To advance equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia

Strategic Goals

- **To increase the participation of women--in all their diversity--in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.**
- **To promote women's economic equality.**
- **To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.**
- **To improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families.**

Core Business Areas

- **Policy and Research**

The Council advises the Minister on the concerns and priorities of women, and formulates

strategies and options to address these. Council conducts quantitative and qualitative research--in consultation with academic and community groups and government departments--to ensure that advice is a feasible, relevant, timely, and accurate guide to government action.

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The Council collects information on women's issues and disseminates such to the Minister, Council members and staff, as well as other key stakeholders--including the media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, it informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, as well as about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments, and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

- **Community Liaison and Rural Outreach**

Through Council members and the Field Work Program, the Council brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically disadvantaged groups; it also partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

Priorities

1. Policy and Research

- **Maintain Council effectiveness through: an orientation program for new members, support for the Council Chair, media training for new members, and professional and administrative support for Council work.**
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- **Increase the ability of government policy staff to include the concerns and interests of women in policy development through development and dissemination of gender-based analysis tools.**
- **Prepare and present briefs on major initiatives and legislative changes affecting women.**
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- **Collaborate with government and non-government agencies on issues related to women's sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS concerns.**

2. Information and Education

- **Implement media relations activities as outlined in the communications strategy for the Advisory Council's 25th Anniversary, as resources allow: continue to mark key dates and events throughout the year, with particular attention to International Women's Day, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and Women's History Month, and ensure public awareness of Council accomplishments and positions through appropriate communications plans and actions.**

- **Support the Minister's ongoing information needs; support research and community liaison functions through adequate informational support; provide information and referral to some 2,000 inquiries *per annum*; and, maintain and enhance the Council's website, responding to identified information needs.**

3. Community Liaison and Rural Outreach

- **Continue workshops to promote women's leadership and participation in public affairs.**

- **Work with organizations such as the Women in CED network, women's business groups, Techsploration, Hypatia, and L'Association des Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse to foster economic equality and lifelong learning in all occupational areas, particularly in fields where women remain under-represented.**

- **Participate on the Coordinating Committee and Field Teams of the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI).**

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